

HALO: The Battle for Greece

by Not Another One

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Summary: NEW CHAPTER IS UP! READ IT! The war with the aliens is over; now it's the insurrectionists' turn to fight. Spartan-III Lukas-D232, the last survivor of Delta Company, has to return to Earth, where Greek rebels threaten the already fragile United Nations.

## 1. Delta Spartan

**\*\*Chapter 1: Delta Spartan\*\***

\_Novmeber 27, 2552. Odyssey-10. Operation: TELEPYLOS.\_

\_Things had gone horribly wrong.\_

\_ Delta Company's mission should have been relatively straightforward. The mining platform Odyssey-10, in an asteroid field near the remains of Sigma Octanus IV, had been commandeered by the Covenant. They were using it as a weapons manufacturing base. The UNSC's newfound allies, the Elites, had provided the intelligence to the UNSC, who planned a surprise attack using cloaked Sangheilli starships for Delta's insertion. With three hundred Spartan-IIIs, this should have been a relatively easy success. But it turned out that one little detail had been overlooked.\_

\_ It just so happened that the Covenant could detect the cloaked ships.\_

\_ They waited to open fire until the ships had entered the asteroid field, and then proceeded to pound away with their plasma. Out of the thirty ships Delta was using, probably seventeen or eighteen were destroyed in the first few minutes - sixty percent casualties with the mission barely underway. The rest, unable to abort the mission, pushed on and docked at Odyssey-10. There, they fought their way through hordes of Covenant to find the reactors powering the platform. Delta's objective: blow up the reactors to destroy the station.\_

\_ There were now twelve Spartans left. Twelve of three hundred. The majority had fallen through the sheer amount of plasma grenades lobbed at them, the Brute gangs that overwhelmed lone Spartans, the weapons that took out their armor's shields and rendered them defenseless. Many Spartans, out of ammunition and hope, simply charged the enemy ranks, trying to kill as many as possible with their bare hands before they succumbed to the inevitable.\_

\_ But they had reached the reactor room. The problem was that none of the survivors had explosives enough to take out even one of the four reactors. Between them, they only had three grenades left.\_

\_ Chris-D154 lobbed a grenade over the makeshift barrier of empty ammunition crates blocking the reactor room from the Covenant. Four of the approaching Brutes tried to dive for cover, but too late; the blast threw them into the walls, and they fell lifeless. "How many grenades do we have left?" he yelled.\_

"\_Two!" said Mika-D033, dropping her empty SMG in frustration. "And we're all running low on ammunition. We've picked up some needlers and plasma pistols, but we can't keep this up for much longer." She grabbed a plasma pistol from a dead Grunt on the ground and resumed shooting. Besides Mika and Chris, there were six other Spartans on the improvised front line.\_

\_ A hail of Brute spiker rounds found their mark past the barricade. Pat-D269 screamed as the rounds entered his shoulder and chest, some finding gaps in the armor, some just piercing through it. Before he could do anything other than yell, another round of glowing spikes struck his helmet faceplate head on. He collapsed to the ground. No one bothered to check his vitals. Eleven.\_

"\_You guys might want to hurry it up in there," Chris said into the radio in his helmet.\_

\_ In the reactor room, two Spartans stood guard at the door while two other Spartans worked frantically at the main control board.\_

"\_I'm trying!" said one of them, Tara-D112, who was frantically pushing buttons on the board. "I need to overload the reactors. Give Lukas and I a few more minutes."\_

\_ Lukas-D232 looked up from the computer where he was entering commands. "I don't think we'll last that longâ€¦!"\_

\* \* \*

><p><em>March 30, 2553. UNSC <em>Chariot of Fire.

Awake.

I felt the vibrations of the ship first. That and the chill of the cryo tube that had kept me in stasis for who knew how long. I knew I was on the UNSC frigate \_Chariot of Fire\_, but that was all I could remember for now. Besides the dreams.

I could still remember the Odyssey-10 incident with stunning clarity. I didn't know how long I had been in stasis, but the extended sleep period must have triggered near-perfect recall. As a Spartan, my memory was nearly perfect anyway. But I would rather forget

Operation: TELEPYLOS completely.

Now I opened my eyes. The cryo room was dimly lit by the electronic readouts on the walls and computers, as well as the glowing tubes themselves. The only other person in the room, a technician, pressed a few buttons on a console. The bonds securing me inside the tube retracted, and I took a few shaky steps before standing firm and upright.

The technician gave me a once-over. "How are you feeling?" he asked

"I'm fine," I replied, right before bending over and throwing up.

The technician grinned. "Glad to see it. That's the chemicals leaving your system. Now you're fine. The captain wants to see you ASAP. You'll probably want to grab some food first. And your bodysuit and armor are over there on that rack."

"Thanks. And, um, what's the date?"

"March 30, 2553. About 1630 Earth time. You've been in stasis for about four months."

Four months. Four months since Delta Company had perished. \_Stop thinking about it.\_

I found the rack by the wall. My black bodysuit was there â€" it had been washed for me â€" and I quickly put it on. I studied the pieces of my armor, lying haphazardly on the rack. They had also been washed, but several of the pieces were scarred with black burns from Odyssey-10 - I barely made it out of there alive. If not for the \_Chariot of Fire\_, I would be dead. Like everyone else. I sighed and started attaching the armor plates to the suit. Once finished, I looked down at myself. The dark green armor had served me well - it wasn't as powerful as the Spartan-II variant, but it had kept me alive. Even though it had failed for two hundred and ninety-nine other Spartans. \_Stop it.\_

What next? Food. I was kind of hungry, but I would rather wait to eat until I knew what was going on. I had no idea where the \_Chariot of Fire\_ was, or where it was going, or how the war was going. I needed answers.

I quickly walked through the corridors of the frigate until I reached the bridge. I entered and snapped to attention. "Second Class Petty Officer Lukas-D232, reporting for duty, sir."

The captain turned from his position next to one of the twenty or so computers being manned by the crew. He was an older man, one of the career military types with graying hair and a firm face. "At ease," he began. "Glad to see you back in action, Petty Officer. I'm Captain Vincent Clark."

"Sir, what is the present course of the war?" I asked, still rigid.

The captain chuckled. "First off, don't be so formal. It's a little unnerving. As for the war, well, it's over."

Over. The war was over. Just like that. "Did we win, sir?"

"Of course. It was mainly thanks to one of your people, a Spartan. John-117, if I remember correctly."

The name didn't sound familiar to me. "He must have been a Spartan-II. They're different from Spartan-IIIs like me. Spartan-IIs are bred to fight and survive differently."

"Then what are you bred for?"

"Completing the mission, sir. Survival is secondary. That's why we get the rice paper." I tapped one of my chest plates with my knuckles.

Clark chuckled again. "Well, it looks like it saved your life from your last mission. How is your wound healing up?"

What wound? I didn't remember being badly wounded - just some scrapes and bruises. Then I felt a dull throb in my left shin. I looked down to see an inch-wide circular hole in the armor on the back of my leg. That was weird - I had literally no idea how it got there. "I feel it, but I don't remember being wounded. What happened?"

"When we picked you up, you had a spiker round in your left leg. The wound has had plenty of time to heal, so you should be fine."

I was still struggling to process the fact that the war was over. After almost thirty years of hard fighting by humanity, I was out for four months, and the rest of humanity decided to go ahead and win. "Now that the war is over, are we going home?"

"We are, Spartan, but not to rest." It was the first time that Clark had directly called me by my "genre" of soldier. "Now that the Covenant has been fragmented, we have to deal with the insurrectionists. They've come back out of the shadows more dangerous than before. Somehow they got hold of a ton of military surplus weapons and vehicles. It also appears that they scavenged whatever they could from Covenant invasion sites - New Mombasa, Kiev, and others. Right now, they're just isolated to Earth, but if we're not careful, this could erupt into another round of the Interplanetary Wars."

"So what is our objective? Specifically, I mean."

Clark turned to the keyboard next to him and tapped in a few commands. A holographic map of a landmass appeared in the air. I recognized it as the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded by Europe to the north and Africa to the South. As I watched, the map zoomed in to one peninsula in particular.

Clark cleared his throat. "This is where much of the rebellion is centered. In-"

"Greece," I finished. "That was where I was born, sir."

Greece. It would be like going home again. I didn't remember much about home - I knew that I had lived in the city of Kalamata, in the southern region. I vaguely recalled two loving parents, parents I had

last seen when I was six years old, when I was "recruited" by ONI. But that was all I knew of Greece.

"That's good," said Clark, pulling my mind back to the present. "I don't have any specific mission details. What I do know is that we'll be sending you down in a Pelican to this point in the South, near Sparta. You'll meet some Marines there, and they will escort you by Warthog to the UNSC command post in the area. It's too dangerous to fly cross-country - the insurrectionists got their hands on enough Archyr missiles to bring down a whole fleet of Pelicans."

"Why not just fly straight to the command post from orbit in the frigate?"

"Orders," replied Clark. "Right now, Greece is a no-fly zone except for authorized personnel. It's essentially guerilla warfare right now - we don't know much about the enemy strength except that ONI Greece and the major military bases were knocked out." Clark rubbed his hand through his hair. "I really don't know what the UNSC is trying to do about this. The problem here is that this is a popular movement - the majority of Greece, at least the majority that's speaking up, is supporting the insurrection. If the UNSC goes in and crushes it, then we get the appearance of being a dictatorship and ignoring the rights of the people. New insurrections would spring up everywhere. That's why we're not bringing in the heavy guns, although to tell you the truth, this course of action isn't much better. The UNSC is losing support, and I don't completely understand why."

I couldn't understand it either. The UNSC had just saved humanity from extinction and conquest - this was the thanks they got? Some gratitude. "When do I leave, sir?"

"We arrive at Earth tomorrow morning, probably around 1030. You'll leave as soon as you're ready. You're dismissed."

I saluted and left the bridge. It was kind of saddening, really. Even though the war was over, the UNSC and I still had to fight. I had thought that if the war ended and I was still alive, I would be able to just leave the military. I could try to have a normal life. It didn't look like that would happen now. Life went on, and I would have to either do or die.

I would settle for not dying.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Please review! Suggestionscriticism welcome.\_

## 2. Landfall

**\*\*Chapter 2: Landfall\*\***

\_November 27, 2552. Odyssey-10. Operation: TELEPYLOS.\_

\_In the reactor room, Tara frantically pushed buttons on the main control board. "I need to overload the reactors," she said. "Give me a few more minutes."\_

\_ Next to her, Lukas was entering commands into a computer. He looked

up. "I don't think we'll last that long," he said.\_

"\_We have to," replied Tara firmly. "We can't fail here. Chris, what's the situation out there?"\_

\_ Outside the room, behind a makeshift barricade, Chris fired away with the last clip of his pistol, killing six Grunts in six shots. He pried a spiker from a dead Brute's hand. "We don't have long. Lukas is right. We might have to abort the mission. We can't hold for a few more minutes."\_

\_ Abort the mission? That wasn't an option, as far as they were concerned. Spartan-IIIs were made to carry out the mission. It didn't matter if Spartans got hurt, or died, or anything â€" Alpha and Beta had gone this way, losing every single Spartan that went on their last missions. It looked like Delta might have to follow them.\_

\_ The Spartan to Chris's left cried out in pain. Chris turned to see the vague outline of a Brute behind the other Spartan, the wicked double blades of its weapon buried in the man's back. Chris realized that the Brutes were using their active camouflage to get past the barricade unnoticed. He quickly jabbed the blades of his own weapon into the Brute's chest and fired twice. The Brute howled in pain as its camouflage fizzled away. Chris pulled his spiker away and kicked the Brute down to the ground before shooting it in the face to make sure that it stayed there. The other Spartan had already bled out.\_

"\_They're using camouflage!" Chris shouted to the remaining Spartans. "Fall back!" As he started to run to the reactor room, he saw that only three Spartans came with him. Mika was nowhere to be seen. Chris had seen far too many friends die today.\_

\_ Chris and the others sprinted into the reactor room. "Close the doors," he panted. One of the Spartans guarding the door pressed a button, and the door slid shut. "How long will that hold them?" she asked.\_

"\_It won't," replied Chris. He surveyed the Spartans around him. There were eight left standing. "Tara, Lukas, how are we doing on those reactors?"\_

"\_Two more minutes," said Lukas. "But if they manage to destroy this console, they'll stop the whole process."\_

"\_Well then," said Chris, "I guess we'd better survive for two minutesâ€|"\_

\* \* \*

><p><em>March 31, 2553. UNSC <em>Chariot of Fire.

I fingered the hole in my bodysuit, right over the wound on my left leg that I didn't remember receiving. I had dreamed about Odyssey-10 last night, just like I had during cryo. But I never dreamed about the part where I was wounded, and I still had no clue as to how it had happened. Maybe they weren't just dreams, but memories

I stood up from my bed and looked at myself in the mirror. I was different in ethnicity from pretty much all of the other Spartans â€"

there weren't that many Greeks outside of Greece, and very few that weren't on Earth. My short brown hair came to a widow's peak on top of my slightly large forehead. My nose â€" prominent, as I liked to call it â€" and my strong eyebrows were the structure that the rest of my face seemed to be built around.

It took me a few seconds to realize that staring at myself in the mirror for no reason probably wasn't healthy. I donned my armor and headed out the door of my small room.

It was 1045 Earth time. After getting food yesterday, I was told to go get some sleep. I would need it to properly recover from waking from cryo. I slept for fourteen straight hours â€" probably longer than I ever had in my life. The doctor on board the Chariot of Fire told me that this was expected, and that I would be able to sleep normally from this point on. I hoped so â€" no use yawning during a firefight. And I was expecting some firefights pretty soon, based on what I'd heard about the insurrectionists.

I reported to the bridge again. Captain Clark saw me and, before I could salute, said, "At ease, Lukas. How are you feeling?"

"Fine, sir. Ready for anything."

"That's good," said the captain. "Right now we're in orbit above Earth, waiting for the go-ahead from Command to send you down to Greece."

I moved to the front viewport, looking out into space. There she was. Earth, my home. I hadn't seen Earth since I was a little kid, in an ONI ship leaving for Reach. That must have been eleven or twelve years ago. Huh.

I could see Europe and Africa from where I stood. I recognized vaguely where Greece was, and further south, I could see Kenya. The Covenant had glassed the city of New Mombasa to look for something, an artifact of some kind. I had heard about that right before we were sent on our mission. I wasn't entirely sure why we weren't recalled to Earth, like the Spartan-IIs had been recalled to Reach, almost a year ago now.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" asked Clark, who was now standing beside me. "This is what we've been fighting to defend for the last thirty years."

I cleared my throat. "I haven't seen it since I was a little boy," I said.

"Sir," said one of the techies at a computer, "communications from UNSC CENTCOM." CENTCOM was Central Command, the ultimate head of all of humanity's military forces.

"We're cleared to send down the Spartan, sir," continued the techie.

Clark looked at me and nodded. "It's all in your hands now, Spartan. Report to the hangar bay. There are weapons waiting for you inside the Pelican." He stretched out his hand, and I shook it. "Godspeed, Lukas."

I saluted and started to walk away. "Wait," said the captain. I turned around.

"How old are you?"

I spoke. "Seventeen, sir."

Yeah, I was seventeen. Forcibly enslaved at age six, trained hard for years, pressed into military service at age fifteen, fought hard for two years. My life had been short and not that fun. I guess that's what it's like to be a soldier.

When he heard the answer, the captain just nodded. "I'm sorry, son."

Yeah, me too.

I left the bridge and headed for the hangar bay. Since there was only one ship leaving, there were only half a dozen men running around, disconnecting fuel hoses and checking weapons emplacements. I walked inside the open loading bay, where there were ten seats lined up, five on either side. On three of the seats lay a pile of weapons. I picked up three frag grenades and hooked them onto my belt, and studied the weapons choices. A shotgun would be fun but hardly worth it; it wasn't the most efficient way to kill a human being. The battle rifle was tempting, but I picked up a Magnum pistol instead; I was a crack shot with pistols. I went with the MA5C assault rifle for my other weapon. I slid several clips of ammunition for each weapon into grooves in my belt.

A tech ran up to the bottom of the ramp. "You ready, Spartan?"

"I'm good to go," I replied, trying not to think about how everybody just labeled me by my soldier type. It was kind of insulting â€" like saying, "Hey, black guy!" to identify everyone with dark skin. I brushed the thought away and settled down into one of the seats as the tech ran off. Soon the ramp closed and the ship hummed as the engines propelled the Pelican into space.

I closed my eyes as the Pelican slowly approached Earth. I remembered being inside the Elite starship, approaching the Odyssey-10 mining platform, with Chris and Mika and Pat and Tara and some others who were all dead now. This was how it felt, except that right now nobody was trying to blow us up.

"Entering the atmosphere," came the voice of the pilot. "Ten minutes to touchdown."

I stood up and began to pace. I hated inaction more than anything, the feeling that I was doing exactly nothing to help. I was itching to get down there and fight.

"Opening aft doors," said the pilot. "Hold on to something." The hydraulics hissed as the door opened to reveal rolling hills and clumps of trees below us, and the Pelican began to slow down. As it finally stopped its forward motion and descended slowly to the ground, I saw two Warthogs on the ground with four Marines waving up at us. A minute later, I was stepping out of the Pelican. The ship rose up into the air again almost before I had fully disembarked.



One of the Marines stepped forward and saluted. "Corporal James Walters, here to escort you to Sparta, sir."

I returned the salute. "Well, we should probably get going." I walked towards one of the Warthogs with Walters trailing behind me. The other Marines stood waiting for us.

"Passenger seat, please, sir," said Walters. "Captain Ferguson apologizes that he could not meet you here personally, but he had other pressing matters to attend to."

"I understand," I said, even though I had no idea who Captain Ferguson was. Were officers supposed to be present at a rendezvous like this?

I put one foot on the Warthog's frame, about to hop into the passenger seat. Walters was still behind me, but I wasn't watching him. My gaze was focused on the slumped figure in the passenger seat of the other Warthog, eyes closed, hands tied, wearing a uniform with a captain's insignia. I froze momentarily and started to turn back to Walters.

Before I could turn, though, something hard slammed into the back of my head. It wasn't enough to knock me out, but Walters' attack disoriented me enough for two of the other Marines to grab my arms and slam my spread-eagled body into the side of the Warthog. I shook my head to regain focus and heard Walters' voice.

"Don't move, Spartan, or I'll unload my rifle into your skull."

I let him finish his sentence before I whipped my helmeted head back into the corporal's nose. At the same time, I brought my arms together at my chest, knocking the other two Marines off balance although at this point, I was sure that they were insurrectionists. When their grip on my arms loosened, I slipped free and pushed them away. They stumbled back as I spun around, my right leg already lifting up to connect with Walters' chest. Now that I had some space, I raised my MA5C assault rifle from its sling around my neck.

The fourth insurrectionist started raising his rifle as well. As I unloaded a five-shot burst into his chest, I wondered vaguely why he had waited to raise his gun. It was unprofessional—not that it bothered me. I turned to the three men on the ground, ready to shoot anyone else who got the brilliant idea to attack me. None of them tried.

"Stand up slowly with your hands above your head, " I told them, watching for sudden movements. "Don't be stupid." They reluctantly complied, and I kicked their weapons away from them and towards the nearest Warthog.

"You," I said, pointing at Walters. "Tell me who you are and what you're doing here."

"I'd rather not, freak," replied the man.

Ouch. That hurt. I tried not to let my utter hatred of this man show on my face. "Are you sure about that?" I asked.

"Very," said Walters, smirking.

"That's unfortunate," I said as I pulled out my Magnum and shot him in the right upper calf. Walters screamed and collapsed onto ground. I looked at the other two men, whose faces were now tinged with just a hint of fear. "Who else wants a go?" I asked. "And next time, I'm shifting my aim just slightly up."

One of them spoke. "We were supposed to take you prisoner and ransom you. We took out the original escort, kidnapped the captain andâ€"

"Shut up," hissed Walters from the ground, where he was cradling his injured leg in the fetal position.

"Thank you very much," I said. "Unfortunately, I won't be joining your party today. I think I'll just take my chances with the captain." I walked over to the dead insurrectionist and took the three grenades that were on his belt. Two of them I hooked onto my own belt; the last one I held on to as I walked to the Warthog with the captain inside. "Oh, look," I commented blandly. "You guys left the keys in the ignition. How nice." Then, as I stepped into the driver's seat, "You might want to stand back."

I primed my grenade and threw it at the other Warthog. It landed in the turret bay as the two insurrectionists dragged Walters to a safe distance. I started the engine and pressed the gas pedal just as the grenade exploded, turning the other Warthog into a flaming heap of metal.

I had always been a fan of overkill.

I looked back into the rearview mirror to see the three insurrectionists staring in disbelief at their last remaining form of transportation, which was currently unusable due to the fact that it was on fire. Did I feel any remorse for leaving them stranded? Nah.

Then it hit me that I was on Earth. My home planet. In Greece, too, the country where I had been born and raised for six years. That was some welcome home committee.

Oh, well. For now, I just had to drive to safety. I glanced at the captain, slumped over in the passenger seat.

Welcome home. Spartan.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Reviews, please and thank you.<em>

### 3. Through the Night

\_Yeah, I know that it's been a REALLY long time since I've updated. School. You know how it is. Plus college apps. Advice - get them done as soon as possible, unlike me.\_

\_Enough about my personal life. Let's continue, shall we?\_

\* \* \*

### <p><strong>Chapter 3: Through the Night<strong>

\_March 31, 2553. Somewhere in Greece.\_

By 2000 hours, I was thinking about stopping for the night. I had been driving for about eight and a half hours, and the 'Hog's fuel tank was just under half full. I glanced once again at the captain, who hadn't woken up yet. I had untied his wrists but allowed him to stay unconscious. In hindsight, that might not have been a good idea â€" if he was out that long, he might be drugged or have something in his system.

I glanced back to the dirt road I was following. It was getting dark, and the Warthog's automatic headlights had kicked in about an hour ago. Basically alone, in one of Greece's many wild mountain ranges, I didn't know how safe it was to stop. I had been hoping to reach Sparta without stopping, but that might not be an option. I was starting to feel the fatigue of a long day slip into my limbs, and I still had about twelve hours left to drive, according to the 'Hog's GPS. I had just enough gas to make it; my own energy, on the other hand, was running low.

The captain shifted next to me. I figured that it would be best if I stopped soon and woke the captainâ€"

My right hand jerked up into the air out of pure reflex. I caught a fist â€" the captain's fist â€" in mid-swing. I slammed on the brakes and turned to face the now-wide-awake man in my passenger seat.

I shifted the Warthog into park. "Captainâ€|Ferguson," I said, remembering his name, "they're gone. The insurrectionists are gone."

"What? Who?" The captain's voice was deep and gruff â€" he sounded more American, maybe Northern European, than Greek. Which made sense if his name was \_Ferguson\_, obviously.

"They kidnapped you."

Ferguson sighed. "Oh. I remember now. The traitors. So that must mean that you're the Spartan. Lukas."

I nodded. "I left the insurrectionists at the drop-off point this morning. They couldn't have followed us."

"Good," said Ferguson. He rubbed his eyes and stretched his arms, yawning. "Where are we headed now?"

"Sparta."

The captain shook his head. "No, not Sparta. There's an outpost we need to stop at, and we'll take a Hornet from there to Sparta tomorrow morning." He peered at the blue GPS display. "We're less than ten minutes away. Keep going, and I'll tell you when to turn."

"Yes sir." I shifted back into drive and accelerated slowly. We drove in silence for a while, each of us contemplating our own thoughts. I

decided to take the time to make sure my helmet's GPS was calibrated correctly. It wasn't really necessary â€" I had already done so three times today â€" but I wanted to spend the time doing something useful if the captain didn't want to talk.

A flashing icon in my HUD caught my eye. IMPORTANT, it said. I looked at it and blinked. A line of text popped up on the HUD:

\_NEW MESSAGE FROM SOLSTICE\_

\_MESSAGE: Check the personnel list. S.\_

\_Who's Solstice?\_ I thought. I maneuvered through the menu options on my HUD until I found PERSONNEL LIST. On the first page of the list I saw the name \_James Ferguson, Captain\_ pulsing gently. This was getting a little strange.

A minute later, Ferguson coughed. "Turn left up ahead, right before you reach that black tree." The forest on either side of the road was filled with trees, but I saw the black one easily enough. I turned left and found myself on a hidden path, one that looked inconspicuous from the road but was neatly cleared. As I drove, the GPS screen buzzed and shorted out.

"That's part of our security," said Ferguson. "The GPS doesn't work within a mile radius of the base. So theâ€" Ferguson coughed again. "So the insurrectionists don't find us." Another cough.

"Are you okay, sir?" I asked. "Do you remember if they drugged you?"

"I don't think so, but I can't say for sure," the captain replied. "You'll see an electric security gate in a minute or so. Stop there."

When we reached the gate, I stopped. It looked like just plain gray metal, but as I watched, an electric crackle spread across the bars, and the gate opened. I drove inside wordlessly, looking around at the security measures. Ten-foot-high walls, metal, topped with more electric wires. Half a dozen mounted machine gun turrets on the walls that I could see. And it was all surrounded by trees. Several Marines were patrolling â€" not a lot, but enough to provide security. I saw some holes in their defense, but I decided to just keep my mouth shut about them.

"That way," said Ferguson, pointing to a vehicle pool. I parked the 'Hog in an empty spot and got out. Two armed Marines jogged up to the captain and I and saluted. Ferguson returned the salute and turned to me.

"Lukas, you're going with these two men for debriefing," Ferguson said. "I'll be with you soon â€" I just have to file a report first. About the traitors." Before I could respond, Ferguson jogged away to a smaller metal building next to the vehicle pool.

"Follow us, please, sir," said one of the Marines in a Greek-accented voice. Wow. The first Greek person I had seen in more than ten years. All of the other people I had seen here â€" Ferguson, the traitors, the patrolling Marines â€" had seemed more American, or possibly English. There were an awful lot of foreigners for a small base in

the middle of the Greek wilderness.

Soon we were in the command center, a large three-story building in the middle of the compound. I had to check in my rifle, pistol, grenades, knife, and helmet at the main desk; the Marines kept their weapons. The Marines led me to a small room that looked more or less like a hospital, filled with various instruments and bottles and a hospital bed. One of the Marines picked up an orange pill bottle and dumped two small green pills into his hand. I flinched involuntarily; the two men didn't notice.

"You can get water there," said the Marine, pointing to a sink with a plastic cup next to the hospital bed. "You haven't been on Earth for a while, so we're just inoculating you against any infections you might pick up." He handed me the pills.

I filled up the cup and put the pills in my mouth. "Bottoms up," I said, and drained the water. The Marines started to leave the room. "We'll go get the captain," said one. "Stay here until he arrives." They left, closing the door behind them.

I sat on the bed, waiting. After a few minutes, a vague sense of uneasiness filled me. Something was wrong here. Very wrong.

Finally, Ferguson appeared with an electronic clipboard and a digital pen. "Just a registration form for your arrival on Earth," he said, handing the clipboard and pen to me. He closed the door behind him. "I'll have to ask you some questions too. Can you talk and write at the same time?"

"I'll try," I said. I started writing my name and stopped. I coughed hard into my hand and blinked several times. "Sorry," I said.

"Are you okay, Lukas?" asked the captain. "You look a little off."

"I'm not sure," I replied. "I think I might have picked up a bug or something. I haven't been on Earth for—" I coughed again, violently, falling forward onto the captain, who backed away involuntarily. The clipboard and pen fell to the ground. My forehead connected with his pistol, which was in a holster on his belt. It hurt, and I cradled my forehead in my hands for a second before straightening back up again. "I'm so sorry, sir," I said apologetically. "My head feels a little weird. I can't think straight."

"No problem at all, Lukas," said the captain. "In fact, I think we have some pills that could help you with that."

"I know what you're talking about, sir," I said. "These pills?"

I opened my right hand to reveal two green pills, the pills I had put under my tongue before drinking the water and then coughed back out. The captain stared, wide-eyed. It was then that I knew my suspicions were correct.

"Your Marines told me that these were for inoculation. But I was already inoculated on the Chariot of Fire this morning, before coming down to Earth. And I've seen those pills before." This was a painful memory. "They used to give us these pills every night, us

Spartans, when we were kids. Said they would help us sleep and forget." I couldn't keep the anger out of my voice as I flung the pills to the ground. "Well, I didn't forget.

"And that wasn't the only thing, \_Captain\_," I continued, watching as Ferguson's expression changed from confusion to alarm. "I checked the personnel records during our little drive. You died during the invasion of New Mombasa. Or at least, the real Captain James Ferguson did. So who does that make you?"

Ferguson could do nothing but stare for a few moments. Then his face turned to a slow grin.

"And all this time I thought Spartans were just killing machines. You're smart, kid. Real smart." He chuckled for a few seconds, and I tensed up, ready to attack. But his expression quickly hardened, and he backed away from me several feet. Out of range of my fist. But not his pistol.

Ferguson drew his pistol and pointed it at me. "Don't move, Spartan. Just accept it. I'm doing you a favor. The UNSC will just use you up and spit you out dry anyway."

It was more or less true, I mused, but not relevant at the moment. Right now I had to deal with this captain. This insurrectionist. This insurrectionist who had a gun pointed at my face in a locked room.

"Go ahead," I said. "End it for me, then. Make sure to aim for my face."

The captain smiled. "Oh, I am."

He pulled the trigger.

At that moment, it occurred to me that I could have found a scalpel, or scissors, or some other kind of tool to use as a weapon, in the few minutes that I had been left alone. That probably would have been a good idea. I just had to content myself with the fact that during my coughing episode, I had ejected the captain's pistol's ammunition clip and then slipped it into a pouch on my belt.

Click, click. The captain's scowl turned to confusion as he pulled the trigger several times to no avail. "April Fools," I said blandly as I pulled out the ammo clip. Technically, it was still March 31st, but in my mind it was close enough.

That was when it hit the captain that he was in a locked room with a hostile Spartan and no way to defend himself. "Just give yourself up, Spartan," Ferguson said. "It's impossible to escape."

"Impossible? I can do impossible," I said, neatly knocking the captain out with my gauntleted fist. TELEPYLOS had been impossible. Escaping, not so much. I picked up his pistol and slotted the ammo clip back in.

Time to see what happens when group of angry rebels meets Spartan.

\* \* \*

><p><em>So...? Please let me know what you think so far. Ideas, criticism, poetic tributes, etc. are all welcome and appreciated. I will respond to all reviews. Danke gut!<em>

#### 4. The Great Escape, Kind Of

\_Will Lukas make it out of the insurrectionist base alive? Find out right after this.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chapter 4: The Great Escape, Kind Of<strong>

\_March 31, 2553. Nighttime. Unidentified insurrectionist outpost, Greece.\_

I tried to open the door that would take me out into the hallways of the command center. Locked. The door wasn't likely a match for Spartan strength â€" my strength â€" but I didn't have time to pry the door open. I swiped the good captain's key card across the sensor and quietly pulled the door open a crack, just enough to stick my head out. All clear.

I started walking down a long hallway. I walked quickly, confidently, erect; if I looked like I was supposed to be here, the insurrectionists would be taken off guard long enough for me to incapacitate them.

At the end of the hallway I turned and ran into two men â€" the same rebels that had taken me to the room before. Obviously they were expecting me to be unconscious or dead at this point, judging by the looks on their faces.

"Butâ€|waitâ€|" said one. It was all he could manage. The other man was faster, bringing up his MA5C. I grabbed the assault rifle and pulled it down to the floor. The man's grip was strong; he held onto the rifle the whole time, at least until his shoulder dislocated. I kicked the rifle away and elbowed the first rebel under the jaw before he could bring his weapon up. The force knocked his head into the wall, and he collapsed as I kicked the second rebel in the chest, slamming him against the opposite wall. He slumped down; now both men were unconscious on the floor. \_Two down, a bunch more to go,\_ I thought.

I dragged their bodies around the corner and picked up one of the MA5Cs. I now had an assault rifle, a pistol, and my spare clips for each. Now I just needed to get the rest of my effects back.

The main desk was twenty feet away and around the corner. I held my assault rifle at the ready as I ran to the next turn and peeked around. There was one guard standing watch at the door, plus the guard at the desk. I shot the guard at the door first, and then the second man before he could react. My helmet, knife, weapons and grenades were just lying under his desk â€" it looked like the insurrectionists weren't expecting me to break out and come get them. "So much for security," I muttered as I donned my helmet.

Before going out into the open, there was one more thing I had to take care of. I navigated through my HUD to find my messages. Nothing

new, but Solstice's message was still there. I selected the "Reply" option and spoke. "Solstice," I said, "whoever you are, I could use some assistance right now." The helmet transcribed my words into a text box, and I sent the message. That was the best I could do in terms of outside assistance at the moment.

I looked at the front door and realized that it would be incredibly stupid to try to escape that way. Anyone who happened to glance at the command center would notice a Spartan walking out the door. Unfortunately, it was my only choice at the moment. I took a deep breath and opened the door a few inches.

So far, so good. I opened the door until there was enough room for me to slip out into the chilly night. There were no giant spotlights waving around â€" the insurrectionists would not want to draw attention from UNSC aircraft. Hopefully they didn't realize that I was on the loose.

I darted away from the doorway and towards the vehicle pool. I slid to a stop and crouched down behind a Warthog. Just driving out wouldn't be an option â€" at least, not without a distraction. And I needed one fast, before "Ferguson" or one of the rebels inside woke up and alerted the base.

I snuck around to the far side of the vehicle pool. Fifty feet away, illuminated by dim yellow lights, a small gray building sat alone, guarded by two men. I recognized the building â€" it was a standard UNSC generator-housing unit, which told me that this base had somehow been taken from the actual UNSC. It also told me that a well-placed grenade would knock out the electricity of the complex â€" including both the security fence and the alarms. A Warthog could ram through the gate easily once the electricity was gone.

I quickly judged the distance to the generator â€" if I misjudged, I would only have two dead guards and a base on full alert, with full electricity. Satisfied that I could make it, I primed one of my grenades and hurled it. The grenade bounced once on the paved ground and went through the open entryway. The guards immediately recognized what was happening and sprinted away from the generator, yelling out for help. Then the grenade exploded, and the world went black.

I activated my night vision, and everything took on a green tinge. I could see the guards, knocked over by the explosion, now getting up and shaking their heads. Other rebels were running around, trying to figure out what to do. Some of them activated lights on their rifles, which were already panning around the base, looking for me.

I sprinted to the Warthog that I had arrived in. Yes, the keys were still in the ignition where I had left them in case I needed to make a quick escape. I started the engine but deactivated the headlights â€" with my night vision I could see everything, and the headlights would only pinpoint my position.

I pressed the pedal to the floor, and the Warthog jumped forward. Within seconds, there were lights shining on the 'Hog, and bullets pinged on the vehicle's shell around me. But I was moving too fast to be hit. I maneuvered towards the gate, now a hundred feet away. I gunned the motorâ€"

And then my world was spinning around in circles. When I finally



stopped moving, I was lying on my side, still strapped into the 'Hog, which was also lying on its side. I unstrapped myself and crawled out onto the ground. \_There goes my escape plan\_, I thought with more than a touch of bitterness. They must have flipped the 'Hog by launching a grenade at it, which meant they would probably throw more to finish the job.

But then I heard a voice â€" Captain Ferguson's voice. "No more grenades â€" we need him alive," the man said, his voice harsh. "Flank him."

At this point, it didn't matter if I heard their plan. If they flanked me on both sides, I wouldn't be able to defend myself completely. I was, to use a rather antiquated expression, toast.

\_Might as well go out with a bang,\_ I said. I leaned around the bumper of the 'Hog and fired a few shots into the blinding white lights that they were shining at me. Someone yelled in pain. I had plenty of ammunition, but with those lights shining in my eyes every time I tried to shoot, I didn't stand a chance of hitting all of them. I didn't even know how many rebels there were, though I estimated maybe twenty.

A few bullets ricocheted off of the Warthog's chassis. I fired back in bursts, using up the rest of my clip, but I didn't hit anything â€" those lights blinded me, even when I turned my night vision off. They were getting closer. I loaded a new clip into the MA5C and waited.

I had a two-step plan. One: throw a grenade at the soldiers to my left. Two: run to my right, towards the gate, shooting anyone in my path. \_Three: die,\_ I thought glumly, knowing that I couldn't run a hundred feet without getting shot. So when the IMPORTANT icon blinked in my HUD again with a new message, I quickly opened it.

\_MESSAGE: Stand by, Lukas. S.\_

\_Stand by for what?\_ I thought. And that's when the lights came on.

The entire base was filled with light from above, like the heavens had opened up. But instead of angels, there were half a dozen Hornets with spotlights high above us, their twin rotors spinning. "This is the UNSC," said a loud voice. "There is no escape. Drop your weapons and raise your hands above your heads. You will not be given a second chance."

I looked out from my makeshift bunker to see the frustrated rebels throwing their weapons onto the ground. Captain Ferguson was in the middle of the group, looking angry but resigned to his fate. This seemed like a good time to step out of cover. I looked up to the Hornets and waved my arms back and forth.

"Hey, Spartan!" someone yelled. I looked towards the gate and saw two Marines â€" real ones this time â€" standing in front of a line of Warthogs. "Can you open up the gate?"

"Sure," I said, jogging over to the gate and pressing the release button on the control panel. The gates unlocked, and the Marines

pushed them open to let the Warthogs in. Three Hornets descended to ground level, and soon there were a few dozen Marines in the compound, handcuffing the rebels and searching for more throughout the base.

"Hey, Spartan!" yelled a different Marine for the second time in as many minutes. The man was sitting in a turret seat in one of the Hornets. I was really starting to hate that word. "We need to take you back to Sparta. Hop in."

I was grateful not to have to drive for another twelve hours â€" a trip in a Hornet would only take a fraction of the time. Plus, my adrenaline rush was wearing off, leaving me exhausted. I climbed into a passenger's seat and leaned my helmeted head against the hard shell of the Hornet's interior. It felt like Earth's softest pillow.

We took off into the night sky, and I felt the vibration of the engines calming my nerves and soothing my body. Before I drifted off, I sent a simple message to Solstice. "Thank you, Solstice."

Almost immediately, I received a response.

\_MESSAGE: My pleasure, Lukas. See you soon. S.\_

And with that comforting note, I slipped into a deep, uninterrupted sleepâ€|

\* \* \*

><p><em>And with that comforting note, I leave you to ponder this story and write good reviews...<em>

End  
file.